

NIH eRA eCGAP

Service Provider Q&A

Post-Meeting—October 6, 2004

1. According to the eRA newsletter article: <http://era.nih.gov/eranews/eraArticle.cfm?news=5D976289-1ADF-4BA5-AE5310AC8AEBB411>:

“In January 2005, eRA will achieve a major milestone when receipt of simple, modular grants (new, competing continuation, and revised) goes into full production.”

Does this mean we can submit R01, R03, and R21 for the HIV Deadline (Jan 2)?

Answer:

No. eRA eCGAP will open production for most simple, modular applications some time between January 3 and January 7, 2005, at the earliest, which means a January 2 receipt date is not feasible. As for eCGAP handling HIV grant applications, there are some requirements for those applications that we have not yet incorporated into eCGAP. We do not expect to do that by January.

2. Any update on what happened Friday, when the deployment of the new web site coincided with the schema becoming unavailable and the production servers not responding?

Answer:

The short answer is it happened due to miscommunication. We are planning to move the schema files to a safer location and put them in Configuration Control and Management. The schema on the partnership web page will then become just a reference and not a live link. This is not going to take place in time for the Nov. 1 receipt date for eCGAP applications, but certainly by the time we go live in January. This will require some minor code changes from Service Providers to point to the new schema locations. We will inform you when those changes will occur so you have time to put that in effect. The schema problem was unrelated to the other issue, where you were not getting a response back. The response issue has been resolved.

3. What is the emergency or failover plan if servers become unavailable? What is NIH's contingency plan if they encounter technical problems in its own system?

Answer:

The eCGAP team is going to discuss this and other issues from this pilot. We will figure out how to communicate better to you in addition to having a better back-up plan. We will also check configuration even before we open up production. If the problem is on the NIH side, NIH will take ownership and adjust the deadline accordingly for receipt of applications.

4. If it is NIH's problem, how will we – Service Providers – know?

Answer:

As soon as we identify it as our issue, we need to find a way to communicate that to you and to the grantee community. We realize that part of the problem is that applicants do not know if the technical problems are occurring with the Service Providers or NIH.

5. What is NIH's plan to support Service Providers who are not on East Coast time?

Answer:

When we go into production, there are plans to have the Help Desk stay until 7 p.m. or 8 p.m. We will also make sure we have more people around here later in the day.

6. When I submitted an application, I got a validation error back that they were not able to read the attachment. When I resubmitted the application, everything was fine. Do you know if any other Service Providers encountered a similar problem?

Answer:

We did not hear about this from anyone else. Send us an email and we will look into it.

7. One of the concerns I have about stopgaps that become problematic is that once the ticket is issued and NIH is supposed to retrieve the grant application package, I have no indication that NIH tried to retrieve the package and failed. There is no failover to say that I should try again. What can be done about that? And how many attempts will NIH make to get the grant package?

Answer:

This pilot was unusual because of the problems we encountered. If everything goes smoothly, you should receive a notification. As for how many times NIH tries to get the grant package, that number can vary. Right now it is one attempt but it can be increased to three attempts or what is considered a reasonable number. If the download fails, an error message should go back saying the download failed because of an internal error.

8. Suppose our server is down and you come to retrieve the grant and cannot retrieve it. You send us a response message but our server is still down. Do you try again to send the response message?

Answer:

No, not in the current configuration. We will configure the system so that we will retry retrieving the grant multiple times. We are working on a retry queue so that

we capture that and have more of a guaranteed delivery mechanism. It is on the table. And if your system is down and we cannot even tell you that something went wrong, we need to capture that in the retry queue.

9. My understanding is that Val Exchange does not know anything about previously submitted exchanges. Yet when I resubmit, I get a message that a duplicate record exists, which tells me that it is checking previous submissions. Can you explain this?

Answer:

There is no concept of correction in Val Exchange. But we will go back and check our requirements for how our corrections work and Val Exchange and talk to our developers to provide you with more information.

10. In the last few months, when we send in a grant, we've gotten an asynchronous message. That's when you bounce to the middle tier because things have stalled and you have to provide a kick to the system. Is that problem being addressed?

Answer:

It may have been that the database bounced so we restarted the middle tier. We have a process in place to keep that synchronized. We are working on a failover; learning how to do this without interrupting your service. This is more of an issue in the test environment because we have more going on. We have to make sure this does not happen in production.

11. If NIH received 15 to 20 applications, that number is sure to increase drastically in January. It would be beneficial to test the system now with the help of Service Providers than to go straight into production and have production lock up.

Answer:

We agree we need to do this sooner. We might take you up on that offer.

12. When is test coming back up for November?

Answer:

It should be back up either today or tomorrow. We will send you an announcement. Also, we are trying to integrate our environment with that of the Commons demo. We are hoping to have that in a month or two.

13. When will the PPF update be available in production?

We won't be able to implement that for this pilot; it is on the plate for stakeholder review.

14. When is certification going to take place? We have two applicants this month who are interested in submitting in January.

Answer:

We are still having discussions in-house. We are fairly clear on the certification tests but what certification means is a more complicated issue.